

RAWLINS BUILDING
515 Railroad Avenue
Las Vegas
San Miguel County
New Mexico

HABS NM-209
NM-209

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20240-0001

ADDENDUM TO:
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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Addendum to RAWLINS BUILDING

HABS No. NM-209

Location: 515 Railroad Avenue, Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico.

The Rawlins Building is located within the Railroad Avenue Historic District and is included as a contributing structure in the “Historic Resources of Las Vegas, New Mexico” inventory for the National Register of Historic Places (1984).

Significance: The Rawlins Building was constructed in 1899, and is representative of the large, often Italianate in appearance, commercial structures built in Las Vegas as a result of the railroad. These buildings were generally two or three stories in height, with a centrally-located entrance and display windows. Materials used in the construction of such buildings included stone and brick masonry; ornamental components were crafted of pressed metal.

History: The railroad steam-rolled into Las Vegas in July of 1879, although it stopped one mile east of the historic city center at the plaza. Soon after, tents and shacks spouted around the railroad facilities in part to accommodate the estimated one thousand newcomers to the area that were drawn to Las Vegas by the rails. The railroad provided employment, as well as fostered the transport of goods that long had followed traders on the Santa Fe trail. Within several years, the shanty town gave way to a more permanent settlement around the depot. Commercial buildings of brick masonry were erected, often incorporating the aesthetic components from the Italianate style as well as new materials like fired bricks and cast iron. In addition, mass-produced, pressed metal details were used for the storefronts and ceilings.

This new town neighborhood of Las Vegas was also the location for the saloons and dance-halls of western frontier legend; Doc Holliday bought one such establishment in 1879. Holliday shot a man, who died, and left town the following year.¹ By the century’s end, new town also attracted Fred Harvey, who built the La Castaneda Hotel across from the depot; the Harvey House Hotel, as the La Castaneda was originally known, waitresses lived in the Rawlins House.

The Harvey House Hotel waitresses were under six or nine month long contracts, during which time they lived in the Rawlins Building. While under contract, the women could take classes at the school, but were not allowed to marry.²

¹“Railroad District,” *Historic Las Vegas, New Mexico: Along the Santa Fe Trail*. Las Vegas: Citizens’ Committee for Historic Preservation, 2004.

²Marci L. Riskin, *The Train Stops Here: New Mexico’s Railway Legacy* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 63.

Description: The Rawlins House is two stories in height and is capped by a cornice decorated with bosses, fleur-de-lis, brackets, and garlands. Architecturally, the pressed metal on the facade and recessed storefront lend the structure its significance. Ionic columns provide further ornamentation to the upper story of the facade.

Sources:

“Rawlins Building,” *Historic Las Vegas, New Mexico: Along the Santa Fe Trail*. Las Vegas: Citizens’ Committee for Historic Preservation, 2004.

Marci L. Riskin, *The Train Stops Here: New Mexico’s Railway Legacy*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005.

Ellen Threinen, “Railroad Avenue Historic District,” Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1979.

Chris Wilson, “Nuestra Senora de Los Dolores de Las Vegas (City of Los Vegas),” Nomination, National Register of Historic Places, 1984.